

CHILDREN OF THE NEW CHINA

THRIVE AT MONMOUTH

Will they forge a new path in America
or return home as "Sea Turtles"?



TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT: CHINESE STUDENT ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT NINGNING CHEN, YUXIANG GUO, DANDAN XIAO
BOTTOM, LEFT TO RIGHT: TAIRAN SONG, SUMMER (XIA ZHANG) '12M, YUCHEN WU

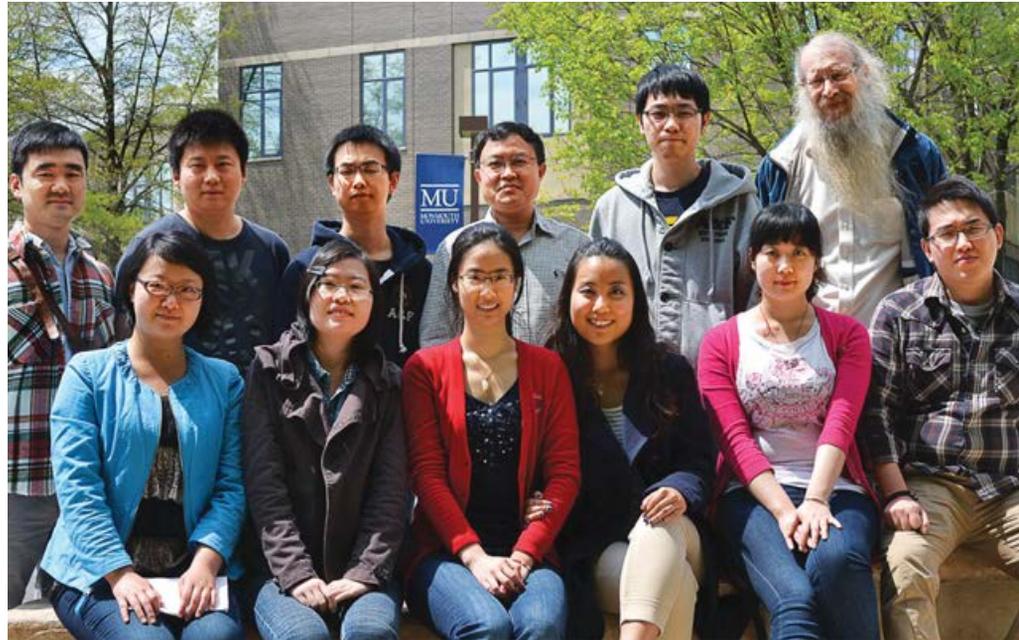


**What no Facebook?
“That’s right!” said,
Ningning Chen, one of
the 11 Chinese students
enrolled in Monmouth
University during the
2012-2013 academic year.
“Facebook is not allowed
[in China].”**

Although Facebook may be forbidden in her native land, as children of the “New China,” Chen’s generation has had other doors opened to them as never before. With economic reform, China is now home to a growing number of middle-class parents who want the best for their, in most cases, only child’s future. They want them to achieve academic success. And that success often means getting into an American university.

“Education in China is top priority. Parents want their children to excel academically,” said Dr. Jiacun Wang, chair of the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering.

Students must pass rigorous testing before being accepted to a Chinese university. A high-stakes exam called “gao kao” is given only once a year. It is China’s national university entrance



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DR. JIACUN WANG (TOP ROW CENTER), AND DR. WILLIAM TEPFENHART, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND SOFTWARE ENGINEERING (TOP ROW FAR RIGHT), GATHER AT THE FINAL MEETING OF THE CHINESE STUDENT ASSOCIATION ON MAY 13

Although Chen prefers to be called by her Chinese name, Ningning, many of her fellow students and friends have already assumed American names such as Summer, Jack, Casey, and Jerry. While Americanized names can sometimes help them assimilate and make the transition to life in the United States easier, the Chinese students still straddle two worlds.

Using Facebook, wearing Nine West Shoes, shopping at Macy’s and learning to drive while still using chopsticks, practicing Kung Fu, and performing the fan dance at ethnic events on campus gives them a unique multi-cultural perspective as students at Monmouth.

Chen said that it can sometimes be difficult to mesh the two cultures when it comes to personality traits. “In the East we listen. In the West you talk. Americans are much more expressive and outspoken. The Chinese are more introspective and quiet and at first being at an American university can be intimidating,” she said.

exam, the sole factor that determines admission. According to Chen, “It is similar to the American SAT Exam, but includes testing on physics, chemistry and all sciences.” Dr. Wang added, “All students must also prove proficiency in English as a second language.”

Chen completed her undergraduate degree in China and is now on track to receive a master’s degree in software engineering at Monmouth in December 2013. By attending an American university, Chen and her fellow students are recipients of a priceless global education, highly valued by multinational corporations and in her native China.



DR. JIACUN WANG, CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND SOFTWARE ENGINEERING

Chen is the epitome of the dichotomy of the Eastern demeanor. She exudes an air of quiet confidence. Before she speaks, her words are carefully composed while translating her native Chinese into English. Yet she is from Shanghai, a bustling metropolis with neon-lit skyscrapers and karaoke clubs; a background far from the one her quiet demeanor suggests. Dr. Wang, who is faculty advisor of the Chinese Student Association, said he chose Chen as president of the Association because of her social skills and leadership qualities.

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Many of the Chinese graduates of Monmouth University are already working in the United States, and most of the students who are on track to graduate soon are actively looking for jobs in America. “There are many companies in China vying for employees who have studied in the United States,” said Wang. “They are more apt to hire them because their English is better. They have broader experience that includes creative thinking and ‘soft skills’ acquired in a diversified American atmosphere.”

By interacting with other students, language skills are fine-tuned and friendships forged. “When students first come they avoid speaking with American or other foreign students, but after a semester, they are confident,” Dr. Wang said. “For those majoring in the sciences, communication is not so critical, but for business and education students it is crucial,” he added.

“Even with the promise of jobs in China, the majority of graduates opt to stay in America. It is economically and environmentally enticing,” Dr. Wang said.

One of Dr. Wang’s roles at Monmouth University is to recruit students from China. His recruitment program is



YAO CHU, FEI HU, NINGNING CHEN

so well respected that new academic partnerships have emerged from it. Known as the 3+1+1 Program, it will be implemented this fall.

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Dr. Wang describes the program as a partnership with universities in China wherein students attend three years at a Chinese university and complete their fourth year at Monmouth. Their bachelor’s degree is conferred by the Chinese university, and they stay on at Monmouth for one to 1 ½ years to obtain a master’s degree. According to Wang, “This means more graduate students for Monmouth and a good reputation for Chinese universities.” So far, the two universities in this consortium are Xi’an University of Posts and Telecommunications and Xi’an University of Science and Technology.

To finalize these far-reaching plans, a delegation from Monmouth University that included President Paul Gaffney,

Dean of the School of Science Michael Palladino, and Dr. Wang in March visited these two universities in Xi’an, the largest city in northwestern China.

Monmouth’s relationship with these universities began in the fall of 2009 with Dr. Wang’s first recruitment journey. Since then he has visited every year and many current and former students credit him with being responsible for them choosing Monmouth University. Dr. Wang has been cultivating this international exchange and promoting the program throughout his nine year tenure at Monmouth.

The fruition of the joint agreement signed by President Gaffney in March will benefit students majoring in computer science and software engineering. “When it kicks off, there will be 10 to 15 students from each university enrolled in this program,” said Dr. Wang. Future plans include a similar partnership for graduate studies in business and education.

Dr. Saliba Sarsar, associate vice president for Global Initiatives, headed an earlier delegation to explore opportunities with these Chinese universities in 2010. “We are proud to have Chinese students pursue their studies at Monmouth University. Like other international students, they bring much cultural richness and diversity to the campus,” Dr. Sarsar said. With 120 international students enrolled, Monmouth currently

hosts students from India, Saudi Arabia and China, making the University a hub of global educational.

China's best and brightest students like Ningning Chen, have been gravitating toward American graduate schools for years. According to the Institute for International Education, "The boom parallels China's emergence as the world's largest economy after the United States. Coinciding with China's rapid economic growth, a distinctive second generation emerged in the 1990s, comprising more affluent students, but the real influx began in 2005. There were 194,029 Chinese students studying in the United States in the 2011-2012 academic year, representing the largest group of international students from a single country and accounting for 25.4 percent of all foreign students studying in the United States."

In the last decade, students from mainland China have reconfigured the international mix at American universities. Peggy Blumenthal, vice president of the Institute of International Education, noted, "The Chinese are going to invest in anything that gives them an edge and having a degree from the United States gives them that edge back home."

Dr. Wang concurs, "As global citizens with an elite American education they will have an advantage in gaining employment with a multi-national corporation or government agency in China."

Whether they return home as "sea turtles," or forge a new path in America is a choice that each student from China will eventually have to make. In the meantime, the Chinese students are discovering the opportunities—economically and sometimes romantically—and experiencing the cultural quirks that come from studying, and learning at Monmouth. [MU](#)

UNEXPECTED BENEFITS OF STUDYING AT MONMOUTH

Tairan and Dandan came to Monmouth University as software engineering graduate students in 2011. Although both are from China, their provinces are far apart. Tairan Song is from Shangdong, which means "mountain east," a region of state-driven industrialization bordering on the Yellow Sea. Dandan Xiao is from Hunan in the western part of the country, an area known as a center for tea cultivation and its location near the village where Mao Zedong was born.

When they first arrived, their paths crossed on campus many times. Mutual classes, cultural events and extra-curricular activities threw the couple together, and they soon began dating. Dr. Jiacun Wang, chair of the Department of Computer Science and Software Engineering and faculty advisor of the Chinese Student Association, said their romance was a "by-product" of the program he oversees that recruits students from China to Monmouth University. Dandan, who has a master's degree from Xi'an University of Posts and Telecommunications, graduated in May 2013, and Tairan is on track to graduate in December 2013.



SUMMER (XIA ZHANG) '13M AND JACK (WUJUN ZHAO) '12M

Xia Zhang, who goes by her American name, Summer, graduated in May 2013, with a master's degree in Education. She will begin teaching Mandarin to middle school students in Summit, NJ, in the fall. Her husband, Wujun Zhao, or Jack as he likes to be called, graduated in 2012 with a master's degree in software engineering. He is working on developing applications for the iPhone. He also holds the distinction of being Kung Fu Champion of his town in China. As Jack likes to point out, the word "Fu" in Kung Fu means strong and handsome.